

CLAIMS

1. A walkie/rider pallet truck comprising:

a steerable wheel;

a steerable wheel brake coupled to said wheel;

5 a steering arm coupled to said wheel for steering said wheel and being movable through an arc including a driving arc interposed between a generally vertical braking position and a generally horizontal braking position;

a handle on said steering arm for control of said truck;

10 a deadman mechanism coupled to said steering arm for moving said steering arm into said generally vertical braking position to brake said truck when said handle is released; and

15 a locking device coupled to said steering arm for locking said steering arm in one selected position of at least two selectable positions within said driving arc, said locking device preventing movement of said steering arm from said one selected position by said deadman mechanism when said handle is released.

2. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 1 wherein said locking device comprises a steering arm brake.

20 3. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 2 wherein said steering arm is mounted to a steering head for movement relative thereto and said steering arm brake comprises an armature plate mounted to said steering arm and moveable with said steering arm, and an electromagnet mounted to said steering head, said armature plate being positioned relative to said electromagnet so that when said steering arm brake is engaged by activation of said electromagnet, said armature plate is attracted by said electromagnet.

4. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 3 wherein said electromagnet and said armature plate are resiliently biased into engagement with one another.

5. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 3 wherein said electromagnet is resiliently biased into engagement with said armature plate.

5 6. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 2 wherein said at least two selectable positions comprises substantially any position within said driving arc.

7. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 1 wherein said locking device provides a locking force to maintain said one selected steering arm position, said locking force being such that it can be overcome for manual application of said steerable wheel brake or for repositioning said steering arm to another selected position of said steering arm.

8. A walkie/rider pallet truck comprising:

a steerable wheel;

a steerable wheel brake coupled to said wheel;

a steering arm coupled to said wheel for steering said wheel and being movable through an arc including a driving arc interposed between a generally vertical braking position and a generally horizontal braking position;

a handle on said steering arm for control of said truck;

a deadman mechanism coupled to said steering arm for moving said steering arm into said generally vertical braking position to brake said truck when said handle is released; and

a steering arm brake coupled to said steering arm for preventing movement of said steering arm from a selected position due to said deadman mechanism so that

said steering arm does not move substantially from said selected position when said steering arm brake is engaged and said handle is released.

9. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 8 wherein said steering arm is mounted to a steering head for movement relative to said steering head and said steering arm brake comprises an electromagnet coupled to said steering head and an armature plate coupled to said steering arm, said armature plate being moveable relative to said electromagnet as said steering arm is moved relative to said steering head, said steering arm brake being engaged by activation of said electromagnet to attract said armature plate.

10. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 8 wherein said steering arm brake provides a braking force to maintain said selected position for said steering arm at least within said driving arc.

11. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 8 wherein said steering arm brake provides a braking force to maintain said selected position for said steering arm, said braking force being selected so that it can be overcome for manual application of said steerable wheel brake or for repositioning said steering arm to another selected position at which said steering arm is to be again retained.

12. A walkie/rider pallet truck comprising:

a steerable wheel;

a steerable wheel brake coupled to said wheel;

a steering arm coupled to said wheel for steering said wheel and being movable through an arc including a driving arc interposed between a generally vertical braking position and a generally horizontal braking position;

a handle on said steering arm for control of said truck;

a deadman mechanism coupled to said steering arm for moving said steering arm into said generally vertical braking position to brake said truck when said handle is released;

5 a steering arm brake coupled to said steering arm for preventing movement of said steering arm from a selected position due to said deadman mechanism so that said steering arm does not move substantially from said selected position when said brake is engaged and said handle is released; and

an actuator for manually activating said steering arm brake.

13. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 12 wherein said actuator comprises at least one coast actuation switch.

14. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 12 wherein said steering arm brake provides a braking force which can be overcome for manual application of said steerable wheel brake and for repositioning said steering arm to selected steering arm positions at least within said driving arc.

15. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 12 wherein said truck further comprises a grab bar and a control panel mounted on said grab bar, said actuator being included in said control panel.

16. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 12 wherein said steering arm is mounted to a steering head for movement relative thereto and said steering arm brake comprises an armature plate mounted to and moveable with said steering arm, and an electromagnet mounted to said steering head, said armature plate being positioned relative to said electromagnet so that when said steering arm brake is engaged by activation of said electromagnet, said armature plate is attracted by said electromagnet.

17. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 16 wherein said truck further comprises a grab bar and a control panel mounted on said grab bar, said actuator being included in said control panel.

18. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 17 wherein said actuator comprises
5 at least one coast actuation switch for activating said electromagnet.

19. A walkie/rider pallet truck comprising:

a steerable wheel;

a steerable wheel brake coupled to said wheel;

10 a steering arm coupled to said wheel for steering said wheel and being movable through an arc including a driving arc interposed between a generally vertical braking position and a generally horizontal braking position;

a handle on said steering arm for control of said truck;

15 a deadman mechanism coupled to said steering arm for moving said steering arm into said generally vertical braking position to brake said truck when said handle is released;

a grab bar that is to be gripped by an operator riding on said truck;

20 a coast control mechanism coupled to said steering arm for overriding said deadman mechanism so that said steering arm does not move into said vertical braking arc when said handle is released; and

an actuator for manually activating said coast control mechanism, said actuator being located adjacent a gripping position of an operator's hand while gripping said grab bar.

20. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 19 wherein said actuator is located on said grab bar.

21. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 20 wherein said truck further comprises a control panel mounted on said grab bar, said actuator being included in said control panel.

22. A walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 21 wherein said actuator comprises
5 at least one coast actuation switch for activating said electromagnet.

23. A method for controlling a walkie/rider pallet truck including a steerable wheel, a steerable wheel brake coupled to said wheel, a steering arm coupled to said wheel for steering said wheel and also being movable through an arc including a driving arc interposed between a substantially vertical braking position and a substantially
10 horizontal braking position, and a handle on said steering arm for control of said truck, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a deadman mechanism for said steerable wheel brake to move said steering arm into said vertical braking position to brake said truck when said handle is released; and

15 selectively locking said steering arm into a desired position to prevent movement of said steering arm from said desired position by said deadman mechanism when said handle is released.

24. A method for controlling a walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 23 wherein said desired position is within said driving arc.

20 25. A method for controlling a walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 23 wherein said step of selectively locking said steering arm into a desired position comprises the step of braking said steering arm.

26. A method for controlling a walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 25 wherein said steering arm is mounted to a steering head for movement relative thereto and said step of braking said steering arm comprises the steps of:

mounting an electromagnet to said steering head;

5 mounting an armature plate to said steering arm so that said armature plate is moveable with said steering arm and positioned to be attracted to said electromagnet; and

activating said electromagnet to attract said armature plate.

10 27. A method for controlling a walkie/rider pallet truck as claimed in claim 26 wherein said step of selectively locking said steering arm into a desired position comprises generating a locking force to maintain said desired position and said method further comprises selecting said electromagnet and said armature so that said locking force can be overcome for manual application of said steerable wheel brake or for repositioning said steering arm to another desired position.